

Thank you, Corbin.

Thank you, Pro Temp Greg Treat, Speaker Charles McCall, and members of the State Legislature.

Thank you, Lt. Governor Matt Pinnell, and congratulations to all statewide elected officials. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working with you on the important tasks we have ahead to make Oklahoma a Top Ten state.

Thank you to my friends representing tribal nations here today.

Thank you, Chief Justice John Kane and Justices of the State Supreme Court.

I want to thank Governor Keating, Governor Henry... for being here today.

To my beautiful wife Sarah, I wouldn't be here today without you by my side over the past 25 years.

To my six children, Natalie and my new son-in-law, Joseph, and Drew, Kate, Piper, Remington, Houston - I love you and I am so proud of each and every one of you.

Thank you to my mom and dad, my two brothers and Sarah's family.

Honored guests, friends and my fellow Oklahomans, it is with deep gratitude and thanks to my heavenly father and with determination in my heart that I stand again before you today as governor of the great State of Oklahoma.

For more than a century, our history was marked by booms and busts. The cycle left us dependent on a few industries and special interests. And it left us with a sense of mediocrity, as if we were forced to accept our State was bottom of the barrel and limited.

But Oklahomans proved our *people* are the answer to our greatest challenges. It is why the nation knows and respects a term we coined as the Oklahoma Standard. In our hardest chapters, Oklahomans have shown that compassion and hope for our fellow citizen are what unites and sustains us.

This is the quality that defines our future and potential, and it is the character of Oklahomans that we must preserve and continue to teach to the next generation.

For decades, we were restless. We asked why our State wasn't growing and securing new opportunities like the rest of the nation.

We began to see that we have everything we need to break the cycles of the booms and the busts. With our vast land and abundant natural resources, with our people and work ethic,

with our faith in God and with our shared history as a State – we could build a stronger economy and more sustainable Oklahoma.

When I took office four years ago, the State was in the throes of another downturn. We were emerging from year-after-year budget shortfalls and a government in disarray from political finger-pointing and shifting blame.

Spending sprees in the good years left us vulnerable in the down years.

In short, government was not working and was not generating the promises of certainty and stability for the people of Oklahoma.

As your governor, I cast a vision for a turnaround that would put Oklahoma on a journey to be viewed nationwide as a Top Ten state. I said we can be Top Ten in everything we do. My desire was simple: to give Oklahomans the confidence and belief that, when working together, anything is possible. We take second place to no other state!

And friends, I am proud to say that today the American Dream is alive and well right here in Oklahoma.

We built the largest savings account in Oklahoma's history, turning budget deficits into nearly a 4-billion-dollar savings account – the foundation for a Top Ten future.

We gave teachers another pay raise, bringing our professional educators to top in the region in pay and benefits.

We gave our brave law enforcement officers a long overdue pay raise and the support and added resources they need to keep our communities safe.

We stood up for and defended those who defend us, backing our veterans and supporting our state's world-class military bases.

We made State government more accountable to the taxpayer, ending the State's history of lending our largest agencies' decisions to unelected and untouchable bureaucrats.

We gave people second chances and surrounded them with the support to succeed.

We doubled our pipeline of new businesses moving to our State.

Please join me in thanking the hard work and collaboration of my colleagues on this platform who serve with me in the State Capitol.

Right away, our Top Ten vision was put to the test.

When we gathered on these steps four years ago, none of us could have imagined a pandemic that would test the core of who we are as Americans, as Oklahomans, and as neighbors.

We had to ask ourselves: Would we look only to the government to save us? Would we simply batten down the hatches and wait out another bust?

Not this time.

In 2020, Oklahoma did not put our Constitution in the attic!

Nor did we set aside the principles of our forefathers who sought to establish a government guaranteeing the individual's right to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The great American Dream has endured in this state, and now, more than ever before, people are looking to Oklahoma as the place to find opportunity and live freely. Oklahoma has become one of the most desirable states in the nation to live, work, and raise a family. In fact, new Census data released last week now ranks Oklahoma as TOP TEN in states with highest net migration.

Because when other states shut down; Oklahoma chose freedom and personal responsibility. We led with both courage and compassion; and we did not surrender our citizens to groupthink.

Together, we fortified our focus that freedom and fairness would deliver hope and opportunity for all.

It's this spirit that will continue to guide us and deliver the Top Ten outcomes we know Oklahoma can achieve.

And we will continue our march to the top!

It will come by building:

- a strong economy,
- an education system that prepares all children for success,
- a limited government that is accountable for generations to come, and
- a culture that respects and protects each person's Constitutional right to fairness, family, and freedom of faith.

When the world was at a standstill and while other economies crumbled, our state's economy grew.

When other states experienced a setback, Oklahoma discovered its comeback.

During a pandemic, we cut taxes for every single Oklahoman and for job creators to keep businesses growing.

That has played a significant role in delivering the most diversified economy in Oklahoma's history! And we are going to keep moving the needle on reducing taxes over the next four years and getting government out of the way.

Because in Oklahoma, we acknowledge that the government doesn't create jobs! Government's role is to ensure a level playing field for everyone to compete. No matter your current economic status, race, ethnicity, or background, we want everyone to have the same opportunity to chase their dreams and to make their lives better today and into the next generation.

To preserve our healthy economy, we must also prepare our next generation.

I am honored to be hosting today these young people sitting in front of me.

Please help me welcome students from the incredible schools of Broken Arrow, Dove, Santa Fe South Charter, Oologah Talala, Crossings, and Oklahoma Christian.

To the students, and to your parents, I want you to hear directly from me... I do not accept that Oklahoma's education system is ranked near the bottom.

I will fight every day for YOU.

Because I know that Texans are not smarter than Oklahomans.

Neither are the people in Florida, Tennessee, Arizona, or Michigan.

*WE* are America's pioneers.

*WE* are the people who fueled this nation's expansion.

*WE* are the dreamers, the go-getters, the can-doers.

It's time to unleash our state's full potential.

It's time to re-think education in Oklahoma.

It's time for the tough conversations to address what's working and what is not.

It's time to teach kids how to think, not what to think.

And that means, we must give students more access to learning methods that fit their unique needs. We need MORE schools - not less schools like the fear mongers claimed when we called for change.

We have examples of this emerging all across our state, like the Aviation Academy in Norman which is preparing today's youth to become pilots and airline mechanics.

Look to Santa Fe South Charter School, who sang for us today. They are addressing a unique need for south Oklahoma City by embracing families where a child could be the only bilingual speaker in their home. Instead of ignoring a child's heart language, Santa Fe South embraces it and teaches children how to navigate both languages to their own personal success.

We expanded education freedom for more students.

Because we believe every kid deserves the best education possible, regardless of his or her economic status or zip code.

Just one year after we passed the Open Transfer law, thousands of students are taking advantage and can now choose to attend a school that better fits their needs, like Charles Page High School in Sand Springs which creates a tailored learning plan for every one of their students.

Rural school districts like Woodward are partnering with career techs and thriving.

Parents - we are going to fight for you. We are going to challenge the status quo. And we are going to break out of the bottom and break into Top Ten.

[address the State] Oklahoma, our children and grandchildren depend on the choices we make *today*.

We have a responsibility to do whatever it takes to give our children - not just the next generation – but TODAY's children right here in front of us – access to Top Ten education choices.

Education is not the only government institution we are going to hold accountable for change and measurable outcomes.

We have bureaucrats in Washington DC who think the only solution to improving the plight of our fellow Americans is more government.

But government is not the solution to our problems...

Most of the time, government IS the problem!

You re-elected me to make government more limited and more accountable to you.

One of the clearest example of our progress in accountability is the Department of Corrections. Four years ago, the legislature gave the executive branch the ability to hire the director to run the agency under a unified vision.

As a result, we closed four prisons, safely reduced the number of inmates by over 5,000; we gave our frontline professionals a much-needed pay raise; and we saved the taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars. We did this while reducing crime and leading the nation in the lowest recidivism rate.

Across several State agencies, we've pushed for flat budgets, and we have shrunk the size of government, while also delivering better, more efficient services to the taxpayer.

And there is more to do. I believe Oklahomans recognized this too.

Because it was you - the voter - who rejected special interests last November that were fighting to stop our Top Ten agenda. You recognized that these hidden groups were fighting to preserve their monopolies, their control and unfair advantage.

You demanded a leader who is here for one purpose only: to serve you, the people - to serve all 4 million Oklahomans, to make Oklahoma Top Ten.

And I promise that while I am in this role, I will work to maintain your trust and put YOU - the taxpayer – first. And I will fight tirelessly to make the government do the same.

Today, I offer one final pledge.

Together, we will protect our way of life in Oklahoma.

We will protect a farmer's right to work on their land and raise their livestock.

We will protect an unborn child's right to live.

We will protect the religious liberty for all and everyone's right to worship freely.

We will protect parents' rights to raise and educate their children without government intervention.

We will protect citizens' right to speak and think freely.

And always, *always*... we will stand up and defend individual freedoms over government control.

To my colleagues on this platform with me, we are only here for a short while. The time is NOW.

It's time to keep moving forward with big ideas and to get them across the finish line for today's children as well as the next generation.

I believe that what you dream about, what you think about, and what you work for is going to happen. We are either green and growing or ripe and rotting.

And Oklahomans voted to keep growing, to keep dreaming, and to keep believing!

In closing, I'd like to take a moment to recall President Abraham Lincoln's words in his second inaugural address.

The Civil War was days away from coming to an end. It was a war of Americans fighting and killing Americans over deeply held beliefs of how this country would view freedom, fairness, and a human life moving forward.

Lincoln had to campaign amid unprecedented division. And in winning re-election, he called for citizens to set aside malice towards each other and to extend charity to all, to give grace to the fellow American that had become an enemy in war and to fulfill the promise of a nation where every individual was equal under the law.

He called Americans to focus on this work left to finish - a work ordained by God - to build America as a land of freedom for all.

Friends, today I am asking you to join me. Leave Washington DC to its political games and let us focus here at home where we are all Oklahomans.

As our State Constitution's preamble says, may we invoke the guidance of Almighty God, may we protect and continue the blessing of liberty; may we execute a fair government; and may we promote health, happiness and opportunity for every citizen.

And Oklahoma: May we be united by what the future will hold when we are committed to freedom and fairness for all.

God bless you and God Bless the great state of Oklahoma.